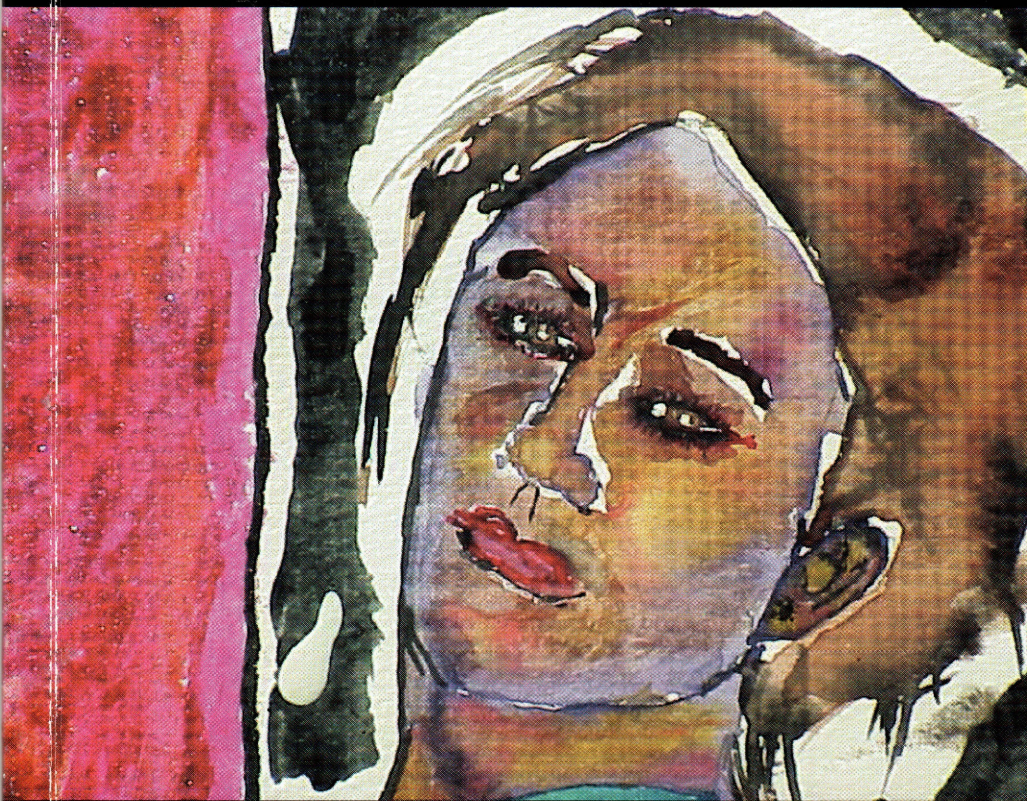


Forces



2000

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To maintain each poet's integrity, all poems were left in exact lower and upper case and punctuation as submitted for publication.

Forces is an annual student publication sponsored by the humanities and international studies and fine arts divisions of Collin County Community College district. Forces welcomes all contributions of poetry, fiction, essays, black and white photography, and visual art from the CCCCD community. Contributions may be sent to R. Scott Yarbrough, Dept. of Humanities and International Studies. Please submit in requested format: submissions are only considered Sept. 1st through Dec. 10th each Fall Semester. An editorial committee of students, faculty and professional artisans will determine all selections for publication.

Allusions

Donna Gilbert

I am no manipulator in the deep
Of any mysterious sea, though I am
Clear about desire; wide open as a
River to the rain, and as thirsty. I am
No tailed, finned, scaly, Rapunzel-haired gliding
Myth pulling you in or drowning you in any
Way. If I invite you into my waters,
It is for a life-affirming swim; a loll
Along the bottom where it is lovely, dark
And secret, hidden calmly there in the deep
Blue ghost shade, a jump headlong off the balance
Beam plank into sea - a brief taste of ocean,
Simple moonlight white on the sand, where only
Unblinking eyes know, and they understand what
Tasting life is. And I will breathe air into your
Lover lungs. You will not drown here. I will share,
Then I will leave you four days buoyant, trade ten
Years for every lusty second. I might
Wrap these beautiful legs I do have 'round you
And sway you in the tide - soothe you in the cool
Quiet of that first morning. I am no muse.
I am my own everything and I want to
Share my everything with voluntary you
For the first-time-forever. Though my home is
Faux complete, I could walk anywhere on these
Genius feet; I could lie down in a field of
Maize, relieving that yellowed view, shucking the
Still life; the stony shore - my heart in hand - for
That brief taste of god and sky. I don't know why.

I am not bound to be beneath the brine.
I could fly. I could dance in front of you.
I could run from you on my strong woman legs.
I could. The beauty is I would not run from you.
I am no Mermaid.

she lived in words

E. Fleming Pierce

she lived in words

she put them on her
face every
morning

washed her
hair in them
every night

she whirled
upon a
little 'i'
until dizzy

and fell down
into a fetal
'c'

she would
bunch them
around her
at bedtime

and wrap
them around
her heart
when hurting

she would:
hang them on her wall
set them in her china cabinet
put them on her lawn

and get them to the tip
of her tongue

she lived in words

but never did speak.

Chameleon Trap

Christina Lamb

Go ahead - I dare you. Look into my eyes
See beyond my grinning gaze and call me at my lies
You think you really know me? Surprise - you never did
All you know is what I cared to show - the rest I hid
I've yet to wear a costume, or hide behind a mask
The skin I'm in works well enough for every sort of task
By far the best disguise, it thrives on subtlety
I see you through chameleon eyes, but you cannot see me
Just endless greenery. . .
I wasn't born this way; my soul was once exposed
Emotion radiated from my fingertips and toes
Until the day the colors deep and true within me froze
This mask is just my face. This costume's just my skin
But I can never take them off - deception beats too deep within
And that is why I dare you. Look into these eyes
Find some slight discrepancy and catch me at my lies
I've gotten far too good at this - I want it all to end
Find me out and please, please make me human once again

Red

Dallie Clark

Telling you I will bestow
color is not enough.
Why, for example, would I offer
red, mere, red,
when pomegranates, rubies
and poppies are dammed up inside of me?
Why speak of sane
muted blue,
when azure, indigo and
aniline oceans swell and dip for you
like moontides beneath my skin?

I choose not to cast common
minutes or hours at your feet,
when it is a gathering of seasons,
I long to show you. Gifts
of amber bonfires
heavy with autumn,
first snows, secret and silent in winter,
the naked growth
of chartreuse springs,
and dimpled shade beneath
the great, canopied oaks
of summer - all these await you.

And it would be foolish to let shapeless
forms fall from my lips.
Instead I save
the inner rooms behind them
and carefully scented
language born only for you.
I am protecting these still, slumbering
words, rooted deeply,
words in dark red,
destined for unearthing
only when the gentle, but chosen,
daylight comes.

Dover at Eventide

Christina Lamb

Indeed the sea is fair
The dancing stars light up each wave
In eerie brilliance, mirrored everywhere
Someday, my dear, I fear that we shall find
We tried too hard to figure out this shore
To notion and emotion freely gave
Till those who nature's beauty would ignore
Would laugh at us to see how we had pined

Observe the moon once more
And see, my love, how frail the form above
And far below, the image we adore
Entombed beneath the glassy sea, is lost
As a great pearl, winking from the depths
Deeper and deeper - still sinking; yet, in the air a dove
Winging her way to heaven, which gladly accepts
While to and fro below, the ghastly glow is tossed

Alone above; below, already dead
Are not the stars that gather round her head
The luckier by far, though lesser known?
The night is theirs - the sea and dance, their own
They don't disguise the melancholy there
They embody it and equally must share
My love, let us hold onto love first
Instead of just each other - the worst
Is yet to come; it shall take a humanity
Of love to weather the angry sea
Let us bathe ourselves within life's endless flow
And feel the strength of the undercurrent's tow
We'll lose ourselves within the stars' refrain:
Joy is meaningless apart from pain.

Nolhbdy]'s Revenge

Elizabeth Ann Sedgwick

Throughout time a story of revenge has to be told
An ancient story - it never grows old.
Even though the names change,
And the surrounding circumstances range,
This is where it all began
In what could be called an uncivilized land.
A man named Nobody and his crew
Set out to explore a cave because that is what he wanted to do.
With wine and gold talents, they pursued
To the home of a barbarian - or so they assumed.
The place was empty except for animals and cheese.
The crew wanted to take it back to the ship; they even said, "Please."
But Nobody insisted they stay on.
Little did he know eventually that some of his men would be gone.
The crew heard sounds and ran for the wall.
In came a man named Cy; he was big and tall.
When Cy saw the intruders, he questioned who they were.
Nobody replied, "I am Nobody, Sir."
Cy had no emotion to be expressed.
He ate two men of the crew - the others were repressed.
With this, Cy rested and Nobody took his sword
And stabbed Cy in the gut - what a useless reward.
Two more of the crew were eaten in the morning.
Nobody was so angered his levels were soaring,
So he decided to make a stake with his crew.
With four men to help they knew just what to do.
Two men were had for the supper of Cy;
Nobody had to harm him - he had to try.
Nobody offered Cy some wine,
And after a few drinks, Cy was feeling fine.
After more and more drinks, Cy was drunk as could be.
Subsequently Cy passed out and slept like a baby.
The time had come to fix the wrong.
Nobody got all his men who were really strong.
They gouged the stake in the eye of Cy
And a piercing scream was heard rather than the tranquility of the night sky.
With the blood that flowed Nobody said to Cy,
"Now we are even - an eye for an eye."

a poet after that

E. Fleming Pierce

after nine years of being a statue
fingers grab at the still air
for something to hold on to
something to pull
molecules into motion
inside a closed fist

she was a poet after that

after twenty-eight years of celebrations
confetti glitter
flugelhorns
and broken glass
her heart burst from
its bubble

she was a poet after that

after falling from
the land of enchantment
and eating
a poison apple
and having to
abandon her castle

she was a poet after that

Sea of Metal

E. Fleming Pierce

Isn't it strange how our hearts meet -
No face to face entanglement.
There you are alone,
With only words of me.
And I cast out my soul,
On a sea of metal.

Be kind to me.

Isn't it strange how our walls fall-
No pretenses impediment.
Here I am alone,
With only words of you.
I reel in my nets,
Before they settle.

My anchor sinks.

The ghosts of Seamen come to haunt me,
From every island and isle.
And voices of ancient mariners,
Telling, "Don't let the sea beguile."

"For we fought pirates, thieves, and captains;
And weren't without visceral rebellions.
Then came the myths, lore, and legends;
So be careful -
My seafaring child."

Isn't it strange how our hearts leave -
In sudden abandonment.
Here we are alone,
With only words to read.
But dams can't stop the flow,
When the hearth is ready for the fettle.

Water turns to ink.

There Was a Going As You Looked Away

Donna Gilbert

There was a going as you looked away to the wall above my head
And a leaving your body your soul flying up somewhere
Or to someone else's cerebellum who could keep you there
On top of her or him inside outside there in the room
Tasting lips and slamming hips and all the time anchored.

There was a going.

There was a withholding as you never said to me above my pounding
And a skating on the surface ice too thin for heavy vacant you
Or sad you reaching up inside for the you in me the him or her in me
Calling from your closet knob turning to the sound
Of my grunts and pleadings pleasure still believing.

There was a withholding.

There was a knowing as you quiet left and floated forward to your future
And a stealing squeezing round my heart pumping too feminine for you not
knowing or not telling weeping from your childhood bed the secret you lay keeping
Seared into me now somehow loving every soul in you
The ones leaving and withholding
You from mine knowing.

There is a knowing.

By The 4 Sixes

Donna Gilbert

(room for my brain to breathe out here;
quiet of me alone in the car;
roomy of the spreading plains;
green dot dots out on red rolling rocks;
fences blending;
sky expanding)
I feel whole in West Texas,
driving through
from home to you
under wide blue
on a solid reddish clay.
Free up ahead.
No worries on the way.
Just driving into the setting sun
feeling easy orange yellow
wanting nothing done undone.

My Mother Laughed

Donna Gilbert

My mother laughed in her last years at shadows on the walls
of her apartment tucked down among millions of
waiters and students and newly living together lovers,

After having lived a life bursting full of scary things and profound moments and
pain that could crumble down entire mountain ranges.

She lay on a barren mattress buttons pressing belligerently against her coffee dried skin
and her leg up and downing to a rhythm in her lonely head,

After having pushed through her now so narrow hips four healthy shouting babies
whether she remembered.

My mother twisted in her last years her Elizabeth Taylor face into pictures of angst and
God forbid I cry. . . or was it the lithium that did that for her,

After having driven her youngest daughter me all over creation to skating lessons
and pool parties and all the while making me feel like she would rather be my mother
than any queen anywhere.

She sold all the furniture one day in the yard in our pretty neighborhood in our suburban
Shangri-La because she said she woke up at two in the afternoon and it all made her sick,

After having pined after my father all the years since she met him and married
him and made new people with him and forever parted with him . . . but pined away night
and day.

My mother called to me in her last hours, "Donna . . . Donna . . . can you bring me some
water honey?" But water wouldn't help her because she puked up her liver in my
sister's tub that morning.

After having spent a summer in the psyche-ward with drug addicts and anorexics
and girls who had hung themselves the night before, with her daughters getting beeped in
through the locked door for visits now and then.

She suffered that idiot psychiatrist who touched her child's seventeen-year-old
shoulder and said, "Here is your glamour girl, huh?" And then sat down and stared at us
as if he'd hung the moon,

After having combed my curly hair my entire life while I screamed and cooked
me eggs for dinner and went to every open house and always wrapped her arms around
me.

My mother shivered on her final day and said I'm scared the last thing I ever heard her
say before they took her away and we dazed sat down and waited,

After having painted our house and sewed our Halloween costumes and saved
S & H Green Stamps and put two cans of water in the soup instead of one to get by.

She lay there whitening when I saw her last and the beep beeping of the machine
was strangely comforting God's heartbeat somehow maybe,
Her hands whose veins I had traced and loved so much because she was so strong a
Woman floated on the white sheet, white nails with those moons I always noticed and
associated with her . . . they her hands went blue.

And just from me to you I can't imagine losing her even though I did and walked out of
there in a daze into the cold Thanksgiving air and it seemed as if no one knew or cared
that my mother wasn't there.

It seems as if no one cares that my mother isn't here.

*Excerpt from:

The Bleeding Heart

Jaime Lillis

The bleeding heart sets free the pain.
When that pain is set free, your heart bleeds
no longer and your tears run dry.
So let your heart bleed. Let
your tears fall. Let
them fall until the bleeding heart
has no more blood to shed.

Our Walk

Dallie Clark

Listen to the birds, my mother says to me as we walk
along a spring shaded street and I think to myself,
isn't that a most motherly thing to say?

In her deepest body she still longs for me
to see and hear and touch all the earth's secrets
as if I were two and toddling with her in a park.

On our walk we pass a garden nursery and are lured
to go inside and breathe the air of the plants, absorbing
the fineness of the green, the lilt of the leaves, the reading
of the long botanical names ... Orchidaceae ... Delphinium ... Helianthus.
The fragrance of herbs and eucalyptus blankets us as we stroll down
potted aisles and rustic rows of bedding flats and trees.

Before we leave, we pause reverently at the fountains,
monk and cherub alike, gifting our ears with the tinkling,
trickling water while our eyes follow the soft, bubbling liquid
that rises up to us, then falls away.

We say no words, but each of us knows this moment
is green, this moment is salve, for our separateness.

My mother and I then take back the tree-lined street
and begin our journey home, to her world and mine.
Now I am pumping my arms, walking quickly in my quest
for health and soon she calls from behind to go on - and I do,
because the pumping has resurfaced an ever-present urgency
to protect my frantic life pace, my starched agenda.

I walk ahead, almost sprinting, a woman of mission, leaving
the plants and the birds in the silent space behind me.

And then I turn to look back at the woman
who still carries me in her womb.

I walk back to my mother who reminds me to listen
to the winged songs around me.

Night on the Lake

Dallie Clark

We are quiet, as the sun
reluctantly staggers
below the horizon
and after, we let
the moon's orb
steal our eyes as it
drops a glittery walkway
to the drifting boat.

Acres of watery charcoal
now lap and sway around us,
and the lake takes back
the underworld
and all her secrets.
We mimic while lying wordless
on the rocking bow,
protecting our own
inner currents.

Unopened

Dallie Clark

All these years
a disembodied tale
as if I'd been speaking in a foreign tongue
or sending flowers to an empty house

the gift I gave you never opened
and me watching for the spark

that never appeared for what lay
between pastel tissues
nestled patiently in a box
open it open me

More Is Better

Loraine Whetten

The other day I asked my friends what they hated about being eighteen. I was surprised when they admitted to enjoying that time of their lives. Not me! I hated it! I always say, "The further I get from eighteen, the happier I am." High school was boring, and I hated many of my classmates. At the time, I looked forward to the day when I would be the age of my mother and her friends. I learned early, that age is a state of mind, and the more years you have behind you, the more skills you have to enjoy life.

My high school years were short, but the days were long. Dull, boring lectures filled each day of endless school hours. We laughed at the home economics teacher when she drawled the word "sex-yew-awl in-tour-course." Her discussion of the subject sounded similar to an aristocratic discussion of "Math-a-maw-teeks." She spent class time berating the women's liberation movement and expounding upon the virtues of a 280 thread-count, white sheet. I hated many of my classmates. The basketball players had lockers across the hall from mine. Their only occupation in life, besides playing ball, seemed to be harassing the girls. Some of the girls in my history class told me they had never traveled outside the county we lived in. In contrast to these classmates, my girlfriend and I spent a summer exploring New York City, Washington D.C., and Chicago. We thought of those poor little girls as stunted. I hated those years, but I persisted and learned courage from facing difficult and boring times.

While in high school, I liked my mother and her friends. Because of them, I thought forty would be a fun age, and looked forward to that time in my life. My mother and her friends were rebels in an era when June Cleaver stereotypes really existed. Single, they slaughtered the image of poor, miserable divorcees. I remember going out

with them at ten o'clock one morning for ice cream. When my sister got into the car, the top of her sundae was missing. Taking a cue from the adult women, we laughed uproariously when we discovered the missing ice cream smeared across the interior roof of my mother's black Chevy Bel Air. There was another story I heard these women tell. Locked theater doors barred them from a play when they were late one evening. Undaunted, they went around back to the stage players' entrance. As they climbed the stairs, their spiked heels caught in the iron-meshed steps, causing them to repeatedly trip and nearly fall backwards. These women had fun together. They liked their jobs. When I looked at their lives, I looked forward to aging. It seemed they were having more fun at forty than I was at eighteen.

For my twentieth high school reunion, I coined the phrase, "The further I get from eighteen, the happier I am." It was a great time to be with my former classmates. I realized they were no longer boring or obnoxious. Age cast a wonderful spell on them. The sleazy basketball forward married one of our classmates. Together, they moved to Chicago and lived as happy Yankees. Matt changed into Michelle. We laughed hysterically at her stories of growing up among us. "If you remember the 60's, you weren't really there;" that describes Mike who survived on drugs every day of high school. Now he is the head of the psychotherapy department at Valley Drug Rehabilitation. Frank, who had been a "homophobe," attended with his boyfriend. I enjoyed approaching and speaking to the basketball players, now fathers of teenage girls.

With glee, I noticed they ducked their heads in embarrassment, and lowered their eyes before reaching out to shake my hand. I enjoyed the last laugh. Our handshake was an informal but important "peace treaty" between us.

I have survived the springtime of my life - puberty; made it through summer - marriage, childbirth, teenagers, and tragedies; and look forward to the beauties of fall - courage, joy, wisdom, and serenity. Age improves life, and I say, "The more years, the better."

The Exhibit

Timothy Solano

The memory of that cold, final kiss
engages our painful dismay.
As the depth of a lover's conscious deceit
sets broken hearts on display.

Numerous faces gaze upon the glass box,
probing the organ for content.
This hollow muscle would be much better cast
by museum in lieu of this convent.

For emotional worth has long since been drained,
yet the vessel remains here so scarred.
All of the while the box becomes stained,
the extraction, near fatally marred.

As people file through the velvet-clad rope,
it fears the bright light, which will spurn.
Despiteously awaiting the coming approach
Of the next set of eyes to discern.

The judgment in their scrutinizing glance
makes the heart long for injunction.
Were it a book of some forlorn romance,
no one reads beyond introduction;

Dismal is the beat that moves the heart on,
but it realizes that it must go.
For soon this box will be shipped away
to Paris or maybe Chicago.

Where the heart goes has been preordained
by the body and the rest of its tomb.
But the heart is unwilling to lay down and die
and unable to heal from this wound.

So journey we must with our hearts on our sleeve,
awaiting the next hopeful excursion.
For to give up and never to try love again
would be a sin against life, a perversion.

The body is said to be but a box
containing our life's complete story.
Deceivers and liars, though smart like a fox,
expunge from within us, our glory.

So, let us move slowly through this exhibit called life.
We must not be hurried for love,
lest our hearts be found on display once again
And in fear of the light up above.

Shadow Dance

Bob Graham

The blushing meadow beckons,
With warm, inviting rays,
Tugging our clothed spirits, like
A smiling child on sleeve.

Drawn beside wild, lilac blooms,
Purpled pulse of home and honey,
We burst woven reeds
And sparkle in the shine.

A most perplexing pair,
We sprightly pry and ponder,
Shy Emily and bardic Will
Consume of whom the other.

Our shadows writhe and wriggle
On nature's silky sod.
Man's consummate yet untried truth
Revealing oft as one.

Yet on this still, chill earth,
Cool breath upon the skin,
Thinly disguised selves detach.
"Twas warm at first like us."

